Excelsior College

CAREER CORNER

#2 IN A SERIES

Does Your Resume Have the Electronic Edge?

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One of the most important tools for job hunting is your resume. Today, the guidelines for developing your resume are changing. In the past, you have probably worked very hard to create the perfect paper document that promotes your work experience, accomplishments and education in a unique and aesthetically pleasing way. Although useful, this paper resume might not be enough to entice potential employers to offer you an interview. Now you may need to add an electronic version of your resume to remain competitive in the job market.

What Is An Electronic Resume?

Electronic resumes have similar content and serve the same purpose as the conventional paper resumes, but they are created to be computer-friendly. Two main types of electronic resumes are the "scannable resume" and the "online resume." A scannable resume is created when your paper resume is electronically scanned or "read" by an employer's computer, then stored in a database as a computer file. An online resume is one which you create using your word processing software and then email or post via the Internet. To develop either type of electronic resume, you will need to follow different guidelines.

What Do I Need To Know About Scannable Resumes?

Many large and mid-size companies are using **electronic scanners** to help them manage the large volume of resumes that they receive daily. **This processing system is known as "automated applicant tracking."** Once the hard copy of your resume is scanned into a computerized database, the employer will then use a software program to further scan your resume for keywords to determine if your qualifications match the employer's job specifications. If you want your resume to get noticed, there are several points to consider when designing your scannable resume. **The main guideline is to keep it simple!** Scanners respond best to clear, concise language and simplified layouts. You should avoid fancy fonts and formatting that will not scan properly into the computer system. If not readable by the computer, your resume will be left out in cyberspace. Special effects you may have included on your paper resume such as italics, bold, bullets, decorative typefaces, shading and graphics should be avoided when creating your scannable resume. **Using relevant keywords is extremely important. These keywords must coincide with the specific job requirements. Use nouns more than verbs; keywords tend to be more of the noun or noun-phrase type.** For example, say "project supervisor," instead of "supervised project." To become familiar with good keyword descriptors, check classified ads, review job descriptions, or talk with members of professional associations in your field.

The scannable resume offers several advantages over the paper resume. Once your electronic resume is in a database, it can be retrieved easily via a keyword search. This serves you better than a paper file sitting idly in a filing cabinet, where personnel representatives must wade through stacks of other resumes to finally, hopefully, come across yours. Your scanned resume may also remain in the database for an extended period of time, allowing the potential for consideration of a variety of openings over time. The scannable resume can prove to be a beneficial resource but should be viewed as a valuable supplement to add to your job hunting tools. The traditional paper resume will also continue to be used in instances where computer scanning is not being utilized. **If you are wondering how to best submit your resume, contact the prospective employer to inquire if they use an electronic applicant tracking system.** To be sure you are prepared in your job hunt, it may behoove you to have two versions of your resume—one for human eyes and one for computer eyes.

What Do I Need To Know About Online Resumes?

An online resume allows you to use the Internet as another resource to gain exposure and assist you in your job hunt. Job seekers can email or post their resumes online via company home pages, resume banks, professional association home pages, classified ads, bulletin board services and news groups. Employers can also post job announcements by using many of the same mediums and can search resume banks for potential employees.

To develop an online resume, you **create your document using word processing software, then save it as a generic "ASCII" or "text only" file.** Both are universal text languages which allow different word processing applications to read and display the same text information. This type of text is simply words; there are no formatting mechanisms such as fonts, margins, graphics or tabs. Each word processing software (like Microsoft Word) saves files in its own native format. This can make it difficult to know how to send information because you may be unsure which specific program the receiver uses to view documents. The use of universal text enables your online resume to be retrieved and reviewed by prospective employers using email or the Internet, no matter what kind of computer applications they are using.

There are several advantages to emailing your resume. First, you can save money on processing and postage required for the conventional mailing of a paper resume. Also, your resume file will end up in the same type of computerized database where the scanned paper resumes have been stored. Similar to the scanned resume, this allows your resume to be accessible anytime the employer searches the resume database using keywords. Additionally, by emailing your resume, you can exhibit your understanding of technology and make a positive first impression.

Resume banks are another online option through which job seekers can display their resumes. These services act as an intermediary, matching applicant qualifications with employer needs. Sounds simple enough, yet there are various points to consider before emailing or posting your resume with a resume bank. Some of these services are free, while others are fee-based. You will need to invest some time to decide on the best option. Even if the service is free, some resume banks request that you fill out their form, or they furnish you with software to enter your qualifications instead of accepting your free-form version. You may wish to inquire about the types of employers that search the resume bank. Are they employers that you would like to reach? Find out about the competition within the talent pool of the resume bank. The larger and better qualified the talent pool, the greater the chance that employers will search the resume bank. Ask if the service can provide you with feedback about the number of times your resume was looked at or selected for review.

Another very important consideration when using resume banks is confidentiality. In general, information transmitted by electronic means is similar to sending a postcard. Every word is available for anyone to read. Careful consideration is suggested when disclosing personal and current employment information. The depth of your discretion depends on your current employment status and whether your job search must remain under wraps. Before deciding on a particular resume bank, be sure to read the description of security measures offered. Some will charge extra for confidential service. They may offer to replace your name with a number, and your current employer's name can also be removed for your protection. The resume bank will then contact you when

a request is received from an employer. If you are emailing your resume to one of these services or posting your resume to a Web site, security should always be a factor. As long as you provide your email address and/or phone number, items like your home address, business address, and list of references can be mailed to an interested employer after you have been contacted.

An online resume can be advantageous, offering flexibility and serving as another valuable resource. However, the conventional resume is not defunct. It should coexist with your electronic version. Due to the rather bland appearance of the online resume's generic universal text, it is also a good idea to have a fully formatted, more aesthetically pleasing hard copy of your resume for follow-up purposes, interviews, and to give to employers who are not using an electronic dimension.

Opening doors to new employment situations can be an arduous task for many job seekers. An electronic resume may just be the key that unlocks the door to your next job opportunity!

Resources For Electronic Resumes:

Web sites:

Preparing Your Resume for the Internet, The Riley Guide
http://www.rileyguide.com/eresume.html

JobStar Central: Electronic Resumes
http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/res-elec.cfm

eResumes and Resume Writing Services
http://eresumes.com/eresumes.html

E-Resume guide, Susan Ireland Resumes
http://www.susanireland.com/eresumeguide/index.html

The Internet resources listed above may change over time. Enrolled students and alumni can access the most current information as well as many additional career-related links on the Excelsior College Web site. Go to **www.excelsior.edu**, then log in and click on the Career Resources link on your *My*EC page; for graduates, click on the Alumni Connection.

Questions or comments about this article?
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